

have known them, they may still recur, under certain conditions.'

'He is good—he is very good!' murmured Dora. 'But—you are right.'

'He is sometimes—strange, then?'

'A little, sometimes—yes.'

'Well, dear, if it is so—whenever it is so—only remember that he would be different if things had not been so—so—disagreeable—when he was little.'

Dora pressed the wrinkled old hand to her lips. When she drew it away it was wet with her tears.

'He was so fond of me always!' Cousin Rachel went on. 'At times, after his father or mother had gone, he would throw his arms about my neck and cling to me silently, as though he felt that here at least he could always find a loving heart—a home. Once, after such an experience, I followed him to the nursery, fearing to find him moping there. He was standing by the window, that old red-cheeked doll in his arms. "Wife," I heard him say, "when we are grown up we shall go everywhere—together. We shall never be separated. We shall always live at home together—always, always!" He was both reserved and silent, but affectionate to his heart's core. And after that I knew—that he knew.'

Darkness was falling, when the two women went in. Had Cousin Rachel suspected anything, or was it only out of the exuberance of her love for Winston that she had spoken? Dora never knew. But early next morning she wrote a long letter to her husband, and in it she folded a little bunch of violets. Three days later he came to Longwood, and Dora met him at the station.

They have made the old Carolina plantation their permanent home. Three beautiful children—two sturdy boys and a darling little girl—are petted and spoiled by Cousin Rachel. And they are all as happy as the days are long.—'Ave Maria.'

A TELEPHONE MESSAGE

It was half-past nine o'clock in the evening; the girls who had been on duty at the western exchange of the New Century Telephone Company left their switchboards one after another, and chattered as they put on their jackets and hats. Two young women who had just come in, with a cheery 'Good-evening!' and a slight contribution to the general conversation, took their places at the desk. Patrick, the rheumatic janitor, hobbled up to it and paused in doubt.

'I am to leave the keys with the operator in charge, and I suppose that is the order of ye,' he said with perplexity. 'But faith how am I to tell the same, for ye both look younger than each other?'

Anne Messler, a fair-haired young woman of Alsatian parentage, who was ever ready to bandy words with the old Irishman, laughed gaily.

'Oh, I am in charge, but Miss Graham is the older; and thus we divide the responsibility!' she replied, bantering.

'It is as like to be the other way. But every woman has a right to call herself of whatever age she pleases, since if she were to tell her real age no one would believe her,' he retorted, glancing toward the dark-eyed Mary Graham, who had smiled, but rather absently, at his passage at arms with her companion.

'I accept the charge, at any rate, Patrick,' she said pleasantly, and held out her hand.

Patrick delivered the keys and limped away. The girls whose working hours were over ran lightly down the stairs; the heavy spring-door of the building closed with a dull sound. Miss Graham locked the door of the office and returned to the desk. She and her sister operator were alone with their work. It was not altogether a pleasant occupation, this charge of the night desk of the telephone exchange. But the office was warm and well-lighted; and, then, the weekly wage double what was paid for the day.

For two hours the operators were kept closely employed; then there came an occasional interval between the calls. After the clock in the tower of the City Hall had struck twelve, they became so infrequent that Anne Messler left her place and set out upon a little table the collation the girls had brought. Now, until the world should be astir again in the early morning, there were likely to be only the hasty summoning of physicians, the messages of late arrivals at the hotels, or possibly a fire alarm to be rung in.

'You look tired, Mary. To be sure we are neither of us accustomed to the night work yet; but after a while, I think, it will not seem so hard. I will take your place in just a minute,' Anne rattled on.

Whr-r-r-r tink-tink! came a sharp ring at the 'phone.

'What number?' inquired Mary, mechanically. How many hundred times had she put the question since she

had taken her place at the switchboard? How many times more would she continue to ask it before she could go home? She felt that were the X-rays flashed upon her brain, they would disclose those words imprinted there.

This time, however, she received no reply. The individual who had rung must have left the 'phone. Mary wearily leaned her head upon her hand. No, she was not in her usual spirits. Since her father's death how hard she had worked to keep the little home that had been left to her mother! The wealthy Mr. Johnson who held the mortgage was not willing to renew it. Mary had promised to do her best to pay the interest; but, as there were three younger children to be supported, the rich manufacturer saw small chance of getting it regularly. To-day he had sent word that he would foreclose next month.

'Ah, how father's death has changed my life!' sighed the girl to herself. 'How bright the future seemed when Matthew Neal asked me to be his wife! And now I have been forced by circumstances to take back my promise. I cannot leave mother and the children without a roof over their heads. Matthew would gladly share my cares, but to marry him would be an injustice to him. Only a poor bookkeeper, he would never have a chance to rise. Well, God knows best!'

Was it the same call? Yes, from 1483. Mumbling and faint came a voice over the 'phone.

'What is it, please? Speak louder!' directed the girl.

'The Notification! Quick—the Notification Company.'

'What address shall I give them? Speak louder!'

'I can—not!' came over the wire. Then, in an unnatural, scarcely audible whisper, followed the words: 'I'm very—ill—or hurt. I—can't tell.'

There was a jarring sound in the receiver, as if some one had fallen against the instrument at the other end of the line. Thoroughly alarmed, the girl called again and again. Then she tried to ring the number, but the receiver was down and she could get no answer.

'What is the trouble, Mary?' cried Anne, coming back to the desk. 'One would think that a tragedy was being enacted on your circuit.'

'There may be,' replied Mary, hastily informing her of what she had heard. 'I must get Number 1483. There are two on this line: one "two bells"; and the other, "three bells." I wonder which it is?'

Miss Messler looked them up in the directory.

'One is a meat-market; the other, the office of the Johnson Paint Works,' she said.

It could not be the market. The factory—who could be there at this hour? Who but Mr. James Johnson? That he never allowed anyone to remain there after hours was well known.

Mary Graham's heart beat fast. James Johnson, the man who was going to foreclose the mortgage on her home, was there in his office alone and in mortal agony! How it happened she could not surmise, but she must send aid to this man who had been so merciful to her family.

Whr-r-r-r tink-tink! she rang up the Notification Company.

'Hello! Where to?' came the answer over the 'phone.

'Go at once to the Johnson Paint Works. You will find there a man injured or ill; it is no doubt a case for the Emergency Hospital,' she explained.

Half an hour passed. The volatile Miss Messler felt the suspense, but to Mary Graham it was a time of fierce combat with herself. As in a dream she answered other calls and made the required connections. But all the while her thoughts were upon Number 1483. Had Mr. Johnson been stricken with paralysis or heart failure? What if he should die? Well, no doubt his death would make a great difference in the affairs of the Gabriels. Young Mr. Johnson was not so hard and grasping as his father. He had told Mrs. Graham that, were the property his, he would be willing to let the mortgage run a while longer. Mary did not hope that the elder Mr. Johnson would die; had she not done what she could to save him? But why should she concern herself further? The driver of the Notification Company's wagon would bring him a physician or take him to the hospital.

Whr-r-r-r tink-tink!

Now the driver of the wagon called on the line from a drug-store.

'A plague to you, telephone people! You have sent me on a fool's errand. There is not the sign of a light in the Johnson Paint Works; and, although I have "hallooed" and pounded on the door as if to wake the dead, the silence within is unbroken. I am going back to the stables. Good-bye!'